Sociology: Definition, Research, and Perspectives

Sociology is the systematic study of social behavior and human groups. The study of sociology provides us with a new perspective on the world around us. The concepts and theories provided serve as a toolbox for the examination of social organizations and processes that go on every day in our societies and that social constructs in which each of us exist.

Sociological analysis typically is completed on one of three levels of analytical process: macro, middle, and micro. Macrosociological investigation studies large-scale behaviors like revolutions, national political movements, or new social institutions. Middle sociological investigation studies social movements, bureaucracies, and organizations. Microsociological investigation studies interaction in small groups, self-image, and the enactment of roles or role taking.

It is important to understand the different levels of sociological investigation and also the sensitivity involved in the process of sociological research. Sociologists sometimes must ask the difficult or embarrassing questions about the details of human life and social interaction. To develop an understanding of the possible outcomes of human behavior in social settings, sociologists seek to find out what holds societies together and what forces cause major (and minor) social change. Let's look at these ideas in more detail by first examining the sociological perspective and secondly the social interaction of everyday life.

C. Wright Mills published *The Sociological Imagination* in 1959. This landmark work led to the development of the concept of the sociological perspective. According to Mills,

> The sociological imagination enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social positions. (Mills, 1959).

There are three primary sociological perspectives that are widely accepted in the field of modern sociology: interactionalism, functionalism, and conflict theory. Each of these perspectives provides a different approach to the social problems that exist in any given society. The application of each perspective to any given sociological problem provides a multidimensional view of the problem or the society where the problem exists.
The phrase *social interaction of everyday life* is referring to the major sociological theory of interactionalism. The foundation of all social interaction is the process of socialization. Socialization is the process in which people learn to conform to their society’s norms, values, and roles. How people learn to behave according to cultural norms makes possible the transmission of culture from one generation to the next generation. Socialization occurs during three different phases throughout life. Primary socialization occurs from birth until school age. Secondary socialization occurs later in childhood until a teenager transitions to adulthood. Adult socialization occurs during the adult years of an individual.

Numerous individuals and social institutions play a role in the social interaction of everyday life and therefore play a role in the socialization of each individual. The process by which we come to understand our society and the world around us is based on this process of socialization.

**Reference**